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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5466  
INFO RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY PRIORITY 9718  
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 1524  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 3895  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 1032  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1792  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 6556  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9814  
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY 2237  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 3741  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 0767  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 8993  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1550  
RHWSMRC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 022365

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: GOP ARRESTS BALOCH POLITICAL LEADERS TO STOP LONG  
MARCH

REF: ISLAMABAD 17548

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

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11. (U) On November 27, police raided Baloch National Party (BNP) President Sardar Akhtar Mengal's office and put him under house arrest. The arrest was the most prominent of a series that have occurred since the announcement of a "long march" from Gwadar to Quetta to protest President Musharraf's policies in Balochistan. Opposition members in the Senate jointly protested the arrests, but Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sher Afgan Niazi defended the Government of Pakistan's (GOP) actions, saying that Mengal had been taken into custody as a preventive measure, since Mengal's free movement could harm law and order in Balochistan. The motivation for the GOP crackdown may be to secure the region ahead of a 7-9 December President Musharraf visit. The outcome may be another increase in already high levels of Baloch anger at the central government. End Summary.

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Mengal's Long March Plan,  
Fiery Rally Speech Spark Arrests  
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12. (U) On October 29, Baloch National Party President Sardar Akhtar Mengal announced a "long march" from Gwadar to Quetta - a distance of approximately 500 miles. The march was designed to highlight Baloch opposition to GOP policies in Balochistan, including offensive military operations, extra-judicial arrests of political activists, disappearances of Baloch youth, the settlement of non-Baloch in Balochistan, and the construction of military cantonments. The event also was viewed as a protest against the late August Pak-Mil killing of Nawab Bugti. The march had been scheduled to start in Gwadar on November 30 with a public meeting, and then



proceed north, ending in Quetta on December 11 with a rally and another public meeting.

13. (C) On November 26, police began arresting district level BNP leaders as well as a Union Council nazim (mayor) from Khudzar. On November 27 at approximately 2300, police raided Mengal's office in Sakraan, near the industrial city of Hub (just under 100 km west of Karachi) and placed him under house arrest. The arrest occurred after Mengal's appearance earlier that day at a public rally in Hub, where he reportedly criticized the government and vowed to lay down his life for the Baloch people. Since then, arrests have occurred in virtually all areas of the Baloch belt of the province, including Gwadar, Hub, Khuzdar, Turbat, Kharan, Kallat, Chaghai, and Noshki. Embassy contacts report that the police targeted BNP leaders who lived along the planned march route. They estimate that between 200 and 500 have either been put under house arrest or brought to police lockups. The provincial government has also imposed Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which prohibits assemblies of five or more people, public meetings, and the carrying of firearms.

14. (C) On November 30, Mengal's supporters turned out in small groups at the march's start point in Gwadar, but spent most of the day running from place to place to avoid the police. The march never gelled, and an Embassy contact reported that another 88 people were arrested. On December 1, police in Quetta fired teargas at 1,500 to 2,000 students who demonstrated against Mengal's arrest. The students blocked roads and burned two buses and three cars during the demonstration.

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Long March Not a Sign of Baloch Unity,  
Arrests Unlikely to Crystallize Resistance  
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15. (C) While billed as an all-Balochistan event, preparations belied the long march as an attempt to shore up support for Mengal's BNP. Mengal left out many Baloch leaders with whom he could have found common cause, and he did not include in the planning process people who disagreed with his policies and politics. Furthermore, there was no plan to march through any Pashtun majority areas in Balochistan. One Quetta-based reporter told post that "Mengal is making a big mistake. In such a movement, political leaders should forget their petty differences and concentrate on the real issue, which is to get more rights for the Balochi people. Leaving out like-minded political opponents was a foolish approach."

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Balochistans Supporters in Islamabad  
Want Moderation in Balochistan Policies  
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16. (C) Post contacts worry that the latest government crackdown in Balochistan will further alienate the province from the center. On December 1, Pakistan Muslim League (PML) Secretary General Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed told PolOffs

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that he has been advising Musharraf that Balochistan needs a "healing touch" and a "change of course." Even though Musharraf told Sayed that he agrees with 27 of the 31 recommendations made in the Parliamentary Committee's Report on Balochistan (reftel), President Musharraf has yet to "cut through the red tape" to get the recommendations implemented, Sayed said. Sayed expected the report's implementation status to be discussed during a December 4 meeting of the PML Central Executive Committee, but the media later reported on the frustration of some PML leaders at its conspicuous absence from the agenda.



17. (C) Comment: While the arrest of BNP leaders and the attempts to disrupt the long march may be related to securing the area in preparation for President Musharraf's December 7-9 visit, such actions ultimately add to the Baloch's already long list of grievances. Mengal's arrest and the accompanying police crackdown are prominent additions to a growing list of grievances the Baloch hold against the GOP's Balochistan policies, including arrests, disappearances, and detentions without trial of Baloch nationalists; military operations and cantonment construction; refusal to devolve powers to the provinces; and lack of economic development. Like the August death of Nawab Akbar Bugti, Mengal's arrest has given the opposition a common rallying point. Nevertheless, there is no indication that the GOP's actions (or lack thereof) are motivating local Baloch leaders to coordinate their demands for greater provincial autonomy and protection of human rights. End Comment.  
CROCKER